

## LUCINDA

question quite innocently, old chap. Because, if you haven't, we might together. Of course you're bound for the wedding as I am? At least, I can just manage, if the bride's punctual. I've got an appointment that I must keep at three-fifteen."

"That gives you time enough. Come and have lunch with me at White's." I put my arm in his and we walked up the street. I forgot my little excitement over the girl in the cab.

Though he was a pure-blooded Spaniard, though he had been educated at Beaumont and Christ Church, Valdez was more at home in Italy than anywhere else. His parents had settled there, in the train of the exiled Don Carlos, and the son still owned a small *palazzo* at Venice and derived the bulk of his means (or so I understood) from letting the more eligible floors of it, keeping the attics for himself. Here he consorted with wits, poets, and "Futurists," writing a bit himself—Italian was the language he employed for his verses—till he wanted a change, when he would shoot off to the Riviera, or Spain, or Paris, or London, as the mood took him. But he had not been to England for nearly two years now; he gave me to understand that the years of education had given him, for the time, a surfeit of my native land: not a surprising thing, perhaps.

"So I lit out soon after our stay at Cragfoot, and didn't come back again till a fortnight ago, when some business brought me over. And I'm off again directly, in a day or two at longest."